

**Case 3020**

***Megalotragus* Van Hoepen, 1932 (Mammalia, Artiodactyla): proposed conservation, and *Alcelaphus kattwinkeli* Schwarz, 1932 (currently *Megalotragus kattwinkeli*): proposed conservation of the specific name**

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this application is to conserve the generic name *Megalotragus* Van Hoepen, 1932, and the specific name of *Megalotragus kattwinkeli* (Schwarz, 1932). The generic name has been used consistently for a genus of very large African fossil antelopes (family BOVIDAE), dating from the Pliocene-late Pleistocene. The specific name of *M. kattwinkeli* refers to an East African species of the genus. The names are threatened by *Rhynotragus* and *R. semiticus*, both of Reck (1925), which until 1995 were believed to date from 1935 and, with the exception of a single use in 1997, have remained unused.

**Keywords.** Nomenclature; taxonomy; Mammalia; Artiodactyla; BOVIDAE; ALCELAPHINI; antelopes; Pliocene; Pleistocene; Africa; *Megalotragus*; *Megalotragus priscus*; *Megalotragus kattwinkeli*.

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1. Until recently (see Gentry, Gentry & Mayr, 1995) the generic and specific names of *Rhynotragus semiticus* were thought to date from Reck (1935), when they were used for a new large Plio-Pleistocene antelope (family BOVIDAE) collected in 1913 from Olduvai Gorge, Tanzania by an expedition led by Dr Hans Reck of the Institut für Geologie und Paläontologie der Friedrich-Wilhelm Universität, Berlin (see Reck, 1914). Reck's paper of 1935 was written to provide diagnoses for his previously published references to this and another bovid. *Rhynotragus semiticus* had earlier been mentioned and illustrated in Reck (1933). However, the new antelope had already been established by Reck in a weekly general journal of news, fashion, arts and science published in Leipzig, the *Illustrierte Zeitung*, of 19 March 1925. The account contained a good quality line drawing of the only specimen, with the new generic and specific name in the caption. The accompanying text drew attention to the most distinctive feature of the illustrated specimen: 'Den einen charakterisiert auf den ersten Blick das enorm hochgewölbte Gesichtsprofil ...'. Both the generic and specific names *Rhynotragus semiticus* are therefore available from Reck (1925, p. 451, fig.). Reck (1925, 1933, 1935) was unable to classify *R. semiticus* below family level. Schwarz (1937) regarded it as a distorted specimen of the living blue wildebeest, *Connochaetes taurinus* (Burchell, [1823]), a member of the tribe ALCELAPHINI.

2. The genus *Megalotragus* and species *M. eucornutus*, both of van Hoepen (1932, p. 63, fig. 1), were established for the horn cores of a large antelope (tribe ALCELAPHINI) from the Pleistocene at Cornelia, South Africa, specimen no. C667 in the National Museum, Bloemfontein (see Cooke, 1974, p. 76); *M. eucornutus* was later synonymised with *Bubalis priscus* Broom, 1909, a species founded on specimen SAM 1741 in the South African Museum, Cape Town, from the Modder River between Kimberley and Bloemfontein, and subsequently known by frontlets and horn cores from several South African sites (see Gentry & Gentry, 1978, p. 361).

3. Schwarz (1932, p. 4) named *Alcelaphus kattwinkeli* for fossil antelope material collected at Olduvai Gorge during the 1913 expedition (para. 1 above), and designated as holotype a right horn core with the adjacent part of the frontal bone, VI-1099 from an unknown stratigraphic horizon. It was housed in the Bayerischen Staatssammlung für Paläontologie und historische Geologie in Munich. Later Schwarz (1937) gave an expanded description of the species. His only illustration (Schwarz, 1937, pl. 1, fig. 3) showed a frontal region with horn bases, which the caption alleged to be specimen no. VII-468. However, in Schwarz's own list (1937, p. 56) of specimens, VII-468 was the number given to a lower jaw. Further, the skull part shown in pl. 1, fig. 3 did not fit the description of the holotype as a right horn core with frontal.

4. Wells (1959, p. 127; 1964, p. 91) was the first to suggest that the South African genus *Megalotragus* van Hoepen, 1932 might belong to the tribe ALCELAPHINI. Gentry & Gentry (1978, p. 356) placed *Alcelaphus kattwinkeli* Schwarz, 1932 in *Megalotragus*. Harris (1991) was able to establish that *Megalotragus* was congeneric with *Rhynotragus* Reck, 1925, and Gentry, Gentry & Mayr (1995, pp. 131–133, figs. 2, 3) that *R. semiticus* and *M. kattwinkeli* were conspecific. It follows that with recognition of the availability of *Rhynotragus* and *R. semiticus* from 1925 (para. 1 above), these names formally become the senior generic and specific synonyms for *Megalotragus* and *M. kattwinkeli*.

5. In addition to Olduvai Gorge, specimens of *Megalotragus kattwinkeli* have been found in material from the East African sites of Laetoli ('young Pleistocene' level), Peninj, Chesowanja, the Shungura Formation at Omo (see Gentry & Gentry, 1978, p. 361), and lately Vrba (1997) has recorded the species from the Middle Pleistocene at Awash. Harris (1991, p. 187, figs. 5.46–5.48) described a further species from Koobi Fora, *M. isaaci*, since synonymised with *M. kattwinkeli* by Vrba (1997, p. 148). The names *Megalotragus* and *M. kattwinkeli* have been widely used in the literature of South, East and North Africa (see, for example, Wells, 1959, 1964; Klein, 1972, 1994; Cooke, 1974; Vrba, 1977, 1979, 1984, 1985, 1995, 1997; Thackeray, 1980; Gentry, 1985; Brink, 1987; Geraads, 1987; Bonis, Geraads, Jaeger & Sen, 1988; Klein & Cruz-Urbe, 1991; Harris, 1991; Brain & Watson, 1992; Peters, Gautier, Brink & Haenen, 1994; McKee, 1995; Brink, de Bruijn, Rademeyer & van der Westhuizen, 1995). It is undesirable to upset this currently stable position solely because of a hitherto overlooked report in a weekly journal of nearly 75 years ago and we propose that the names *Megalotragus* and *M. kattwinkeli* should be conserved. Until 1997 *Rhynotragus* and *R. semiticus* had not been used as valid names. On confirming the suspected synonymy between *M. kattwinkeli* and *R. semiticus* and recording the 1925 publication of Reck's names, we (Gentry, Gentry & Mayr, 1995, p. 133) stated that 'the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is being petitioned by A.W. and A. Gentry to conserve the usage of the familiar names *Megalotragus* and

*M. kattwinkeli*'. Receipt of our application was announced in BZN 53: 145 (September 1996) and it was then noted that 'under Article 80 of the Code, existing usage is to be maintained until the ruling of the Commission is published'. Vrba (1997, p. 148) cited our (1995) publication and maintained the usage of *Megalotragus* and *M. kattwinkeli*. McKenna & Bell (1997, p. 449), however, adopted *Rhynotragus* as the senior name and included *Megalotragus* in synonymy. This adoption of *Rhynotragus* was contrary to Article 80 and under Article 79c there is a prima facie case for the conservation of both *Megalotragus* and *M. kattwinkeli*.

6. On study visits to the Bayerischen Staatssammlung für Paläontologie und historische Geologie in Munich in 1967 and 1969, we were assured that all Olduvai material formerly in the collections, aside from the holotype of the bovid *Thaleroceros radiceformis* Reck, 1925 and a few primates, had been destroyed by bombing in the Second World War during the night of 24–25 April 1944. By 1969 the surviving Olduvai material had all been unpacked and restored to the collections. Consequently, in our study (Gentry & Gentry, 1978) of the fossil Bovidae of Olduvai Gorge, we surmised (p. 356) that the figured specimen of *Megalotragus kattwinkeli* (Schwarz, 1932) could be VI-487, another listed skull part. Since the holotype had been destroyed and never figured, we designated a neotype. This was a damaged skull in the collections in the Natural History Museum, London, catalogue no. BMNH M21447, previously used as the holotype of *Xenocephalus robustus* Leakey, 1965 (p. 62, pls. 81–82), the generic and specific names of which we (Gentry & Gentry, 1978, p. 356) regarded as junior synonyms of *Megalotragus* and *M. kattwinkeli*. The generic name *Xenocephalus* is, in any case, preoccupied by the name for a fish (Kaup, 1858) and for a beetle (Wasmann, 1887), the beetle having been renamed *Wasmannotherium* by Bernhauer (1921).

7. On a further visit to Munich in 1992, one of us (A.W.G.) noticed that a cupboard in the storeroom for fossil mammals was labelled as containing the Reck collection. This was found to contain a great many bovid fossils of the 1913 Olduvai expedition, and among them the lost holotype of *Megalotragus kattwinkeli*. Dr Helmut Mayr, curator of fossil mammals in the Bayerischen Staatssammlung in Munich, informed us in 1994 that he had discovered the boxes containing the missing material in the basement of an outstation of the Universitäts-Institut near Munich in 1989. The most likely explanation for their survival is that shortly before the Second World War the material had been returned to Munich from being on loan to E. Schwarz. Schwarz had worked in London from 1933–1937, preparing his monograph of 1937 (see Hill, 1962), and had taken Olduvai material from Germany with him (see Gentry, Gentry & Mayr, 1995, for more details). For whatever reason, the material re-found in 1989 had not been reincorporated into the collections during the War and hence had escaped destruction.

8. The label on the holotype horn core of *Megalotragus kattwinkeli* reads 'Or. No. VI-1099 + Typus *Alcelaphus kattwinkeli* Schwarz Oldoway O. Afrika Reck Smmlng. 1913'. The words 'Zoolog. Museum Berlin' printed on this label have been crossed out in pencil. It is indeed a right horn core, as indicated by Schwarz (1932), and also preserves part of the frontal with supraorbital pit and top of the orbit. Two other frontlets of *M. kattwinkeli* are included in this collection, numbered VI-487 and VI-1088, and neither is the specimen figured by Schwarz (1937, pl. 1, fig. 3) as VII-468 (see above). We can now only suppose that the illustration must be of the

fourth, unnumbered, 'Frontale mit Hornwurzel' of Schwarz's list. The holotype of *M. kattwinkeli*, specimen no. VI-1099, was described and photographed in our (1995) publication (Gentry, Gentry & Mayr, p. 132, fig. 2).

9. Under Article 75.8 of the proposed 4th Edition of the Code, due to come into effect on 1 January 2000, a rediscovered missing holotype is to resume the status of the name-bearing specimen. In our view the refound holotype of *Megalotragus kattwinkeli* is conspecific with the (1978) neotype skull. The London neotype is a more complete specimen of known stratigraphic provenance, but the Munich holotype is sufficient for species-level identification. It has a very considerable historical interest and it is fitting that its name-bearing status should be restored. Moreover, if at a future date our assertion of the conspecificity of neotype and holotype were challenged, and if the holotype were again the name bearer, then *kattwinkeli* would continue to be the name of the species which Schwarz had founded.

10. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the following names for the purposes of the Principle of Priority but not for those of the Principle of Homonymy:
  - (a) the generic name *Rhynotragus* Reck, 1925;
  - (b) the specific name *semiticus* Reck, 1925, as published in the binomen *Rhynotragus semiticus*;
- (2) to place on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology the name *Megalotragus* Van Hoepen, 1932 (gender: masculine), type species by monotypy *Megalotragus eucornutus* Van Hoepen, 1932 (a junior subjective synonym of *Bubalis priscus* Broom, 1909);
- (3) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the following names:
  - (a) *kattwinkeli* Schwarz, 1932, as published in the binomen *Alcelaphus kattwinkeli* and as defined by the holotype, specimen no. VI-1099 in the Bayerischen Staatssammlung für Paläontologie und historische Geologie in Munich;
  - (b) *priscus* Broom, 1909, as published in the binomen *Bubalis priscus* (senior subjective synonym of *Megalotragus eucornutus* Van Hoepen, 1932, the type species of *Megalotragus* Van Hoepen, 1932);
- (4) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology the name *Rhynotragus* Reck, 1925, as suppressed in (1)(a) above;
- (5) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name *semiticus* Reck, 1925, as published in the binomen *Rhynotragus semiticus* and as suppressed in (1)(b) above.

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